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ABSTRACT

The emergence of rhetoric and composition as a scholarly field can be described as having occurred in three phases: (1) the establishment of the field; (2) the amplification of the field; and (3) the consolidation of disciplinary practices. These three stages are reflected in the activity of scholarly journals since 1950. The first phase (1950 to 1965) was marked by a struggle to establish goals and to define the field of rhetoric and composition. It is bounded on the one side by the emergence of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and its journal, and on the other by the appearance of the first editorial policy and submission guidelines printed for "CCC." The second phase (1965 to 1980) saw the founding of "Research in the Teaching of English," "Rhetoric Society Newsletter," and "Freshman English News." This phase was marked by a struggle to define research and scholarly practices and a self-conscious attention to scholarly methods. The third phase (1980 to 1990) saw the founding of the "Journal of Advanced Composition," "Pre/Text," "Rhetoric Review," and "Written Communication." This phase was marked by a struggle to construct more forums for a growing body of scholarship. During this decade both new and more established journals began instituting rigorous review procedures. Clearly, the movement away from a service orientation, which limits the endeavor to the parameters of writing instruction, toward a more disciplinary focus signals growth and maturation in the field. (Contains 34 references.) (TB)

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Marking the Emergence of Rhetoric and Composition Since 1950: Snapshots from the Founding of Eight Academic Journals

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Today, Peter Vandenberg, Christina Murphy and I will be discussing one of the most important vehicles in the formation of rhetoric and composition—that is, its professional journals (Enos, 1988; Connors, 1984). Journals are central to any scholarly field; they adjudicate the questions we ask, the objects we study, the methods we use, and the discourses we write through their editorial policies and practices. For my part, I will take an historical perspective, discussing how the journals have both responded to and have helped to configure the field over the last forty years. Specifically, I'll talk about the creation of eight journals, considering their creations as a series of moments in the dynamic emergence of rhetoric and composition as a scholarly enterprise and the shifting roles journals have played in that emergence.

This emergence can be described as occurring in three apparent phases—what I'm calling establishing, amplifying and consolidating disciplinary practices. The first phase, roughly between 1950 and 1965, was marked by a struggle to establish goals and to define the field of rhetoric and composition. It is bounded on one side by the emergence of CCCC and its journal and on the other side by the appearance of the first editorial policy and submission guidelines printed for *CCC*, under William Irmscher, the sixth editor—a policy and a set of guidelines that would remain virtually unchanged for the next 28 years. The second phase, roughly between 1965 and 1980, saw the founding of *Research in the Teaching of English*, *Rhetoric Society Newsletter*, and *Freshman English News*. This phase was marked by a struggle to define research and scholarly practices and a self-conscious attention to scholarly methods. It was a time of large scale retooling of scholars (many who had done their graduate work in literary studies) that was made possible

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through programs such as the NEH year-long and summer seminars, programs that enrolled people such as Sharon Crowley, James Berlin, Lisa Ede, and Victor Vitanza (where the seed for his journal *Pre/Text* was planted). The third phase, roughly between 1980 and 1990, saw the founding of the *Journal of Advanced Composition*, *Pre/Text*, *Rhetoric Review*, and *Written Communication*. This phase was marked by a struggle to construct more forums for a growing body of scholarship in rhetoric and composition, and by the institutionalization of legitimating mechanisms. 1980, for example, marks the first year that the formal system for submitting proposals to the CCCC was established by Lynn Troyka, chair of that conference. During this decade new and established journals began instituting rigorous review procedures, and began coalescing around similar aims and editorial practices. Let's turn to the first phase.

The Establishment of Rhetoric and Composition

The formation of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 1949 and the appearance of its journal, *CCC* in March of 1950 marked a significant turning point for the field. After nearly a century of languishing at the margins of college English departments with virtually no access to the kinds of professional forums in which disciplinary practices are constituted and legitimated, the rise of this national organization held the promise of extending the political power and intellectual reach of those working within the rhetorical trenches of English departments. As Charles Roberts (1950c), the first editor of *CCC*, said of these events: "we are no longer selling a pig in a poke; ours is an established organization, with annual meetings and an official publication" (p. 21). With these words, Roberts signaled the creation of two important new sites for producing and disseminating knowledge about rhetoric and composition—a professional organization and a journal—two ingredients necessary for the creation of a discipline.

CCC did not print an editorial policy or submission guidelines during its first 15 years; however, editors provided clues to the policy through editorial columns. Charles Roberts (1955) captured the spirit of the policy and of many of the articles printed in the

first decade and a half, when he wrote of the CCCC: "Most of us, I am sure, come to these meetings [the CCCC] to find out how we can best help [our] students. The meetings are really worthwhile only insofar as they enable us to return to our desks and face that pile of themes with greater equanimity and greater confidence that we handle them properly. All else is sound and fury signifying nothing" (p. 193). Roberts, and the three editors that came after him, thus encouraged and published mainly practical, service-oriented essays that were largely based on an author's experience in a specific and local program and that were designed to help teachers "face that pile of themes on their desk."

These kinds publications captured the spirit of the CCCC's mission statement which had been written in 1949 and formally ratified in 1952: "To unite teachers of college composition and communication in an organization which can consider all matters relevant to their teaching, including teachers, subject matter, administration, methods, and students."

Few in 1950s were arguing in the journal as did Herbert Hackett in an article published in 1955 that "what we need is a discipline" (p. 11). But by the end of the decade and the beginning of the 1960s, it was clear that some found the CCCC's mission statement too limited and limiting, and a struggle to redefine it emerged. In 1959 a committee was formed to make recommendations for the future direction of the CCCC. John Gerber (1960), the chair, reported that "the Committee feels that the CCCC has outgrown this statement of purpose at least as it has been traditionally interpreted. It believes that the organization can be more effective *if its efforts are focused upon a discipline rather than upon a particular course or a particular group of teachers*" (emphasis added, p. 3). The committee proposed revising the mission statement; the changes, which were debated for over two years, generated a great deal of controversy with "little agreement about how the purpose of the organization should be described" (Gorrell, 1961, p. 14). At the 1961 CCCC Executive Committee Meeting in Washington, it was decided that the original mission statement would remain unchanged.

Though the proposed revisions were defeated, it was clear that there was a growing group of scholars who were pushing for professional and disciplinary status. At the 1964 MLA conference, Wayne Booth (1965) spoke for many when he delivered a moving call for recognizing rhetoric as a valid scholarly enterprise:

> My rhetorical point to a group of rhetoricians is two fold: first, that in a rhetorical age rhetorical studies should have a major, respected place in the training of all teachers at all levels; and secondly, that in such an age, specialization in rhetorical studies of all kinds, narrow and broad, should carry at least as much professional respectability as literary history or as literary criticism in non-rhetorical modes. Whether we restore the old chairs of Rhetoric by name or not, chairs like my own Pullman Professorship ought to exist in every department, to provide visible proof that to dirty one's hands in rhetorical studies is not a sure way to professional oblivion (p. 12).

Amplifying Practices: New Role for Journals

By the end of the 1960s, the reasons prompting the formation of two journals, *Research in the Teaching of English* in 1967 and *Rhetoric Society Newsletter* in 1968, marked a shift of attention in the field. Both were created to help foster new lines of inquiry and directions in scholarship that would move the emphasis of the field from a pragmatic service-oriented enterprise toward an explanatory and disciplinary one.

In 1967, NCTE authorized *Research in the Teaching of English* as a "journal...designed for people regularly conducting and reading research in the teaching of English" (*CCC*, 1967, p. 208). *RTE* was created to encourage empirical research, and to help construct a research community (Herrington, 1989). It was developed in the wake of a rising concern about the state of research in the teaching of English. Richard Braddock was appointed editor. Braddock had chaired the 1961 NCTE Committee on the state of Knowledge about Composition and had authored, along with Lloyd-Jones and Schoer, the 1963 monograph *Research in Written Composition*.

RTE took an aggressive stance, setting out to *teach* the discipline how to engage in particular kinds of research practices. This stance was apparent in the two lead articles in the first issue. Both William C. Budd's (1967) "Research Designs of Potential Value in Investigating Problems in English" and Doris Gunderson's (1967), "Flaws in Research Design" explained how to conduct good research within an empirical, quantitative paradigm, the paradigm which had been recommended in Braddock et al. (1963) monograph.

A year following the creation of *RTE*, the *Rhetoric Society Newsletter* was founded. It first appeared in December of 1968 as an informal publication for members of the newly formed professional organization, the Rhetoric Society of America (RSA). The RSA emerged from an invitational workshop on rhetoric that was organized by J. Carter Roland for the 1968 CCCC conference. It was at this meeting that the goals for the RSA and its newsletter were defined: 1) to foster communication among those interested in rhetoric, 2) to distribute knowledge of rhetoric to the uninitiated, and 3) to encourage research, scholarship, and pedagogy in rhetoric. These three objectives were designed to create a network of scholars and to encourage various lines of rhetorical inquiry.

By the end of the 1970s, Richard Lloyd-Jones (1978) would argue that "we need our journals not only to deal with what to do on Monday but to demonstrate our right to a central function in the academy" (p. 29). This notion represented a clear departure from the mission Charles Roberts and the first few editors of *CCC* had defined for that journal. New and established journals by this time were turning away from trying to "deal with what to do on Monday" and toward a more rigorous understanding of literate practices as they occur in a variety of settings, from a variety of perspectives.

Going Against the Tide

The changes in the field of rhetoric and composition are set in relief when we examine what happened to two other journals that were founded during this time,

Freshman English News and the *Journal of Advanced Composition* which were created to serve the older pragmatic, service function.

In 1972 Gary Tate founded *Freshman English News*, which was the first unaffiliated journal in rhetoric and composition (i.e., a journal not sponsored by a professional organization). In the inaugural issue, a twelve-page mimeographed newsletter that he and his wife had pasted-up on their dining room table, Tate (1972) explained the goals of *FEN* in this way: "The primary aim of *Freshman English News* will be to provide a continuing report on the status of Freshman English throughout the country....*What* has been tried and *how* it has been tried will be the central concerns of this newsletter" (p. 1). These goals were reminiscent of those set by *CCC* nearly two decades earlier. *FEN* defined the field of rhetoric and composition within the boundaries of first-year college writing and was interested in publishing administrative and pedagogical material. The initial submission guidelines supported this pragmatic view: "theoretical and speculative articles should not be submitted," rather "the editors are interested in facts and news about Freshman English only."

Tate's initial editorial policy and submission guidelines favored descriptive and practical over analytical and scholarly accounts. Within two years, however, the journal began to shift from its early practical orientation to a more scholarly one. The policy and guidelines were revised to encourage theoretical work in "freshman composition, rhetoric, linguistics and closely related subjects." It shifted, according to Tate, largely in response to the kinds of submissions he was receiving. Recently he explained that "from the beginning...in spite of all my efforts—field editors, etc.—people insisted on sending in essays that contained more theory than news" (personal communication, April 1994).

In 1980, the *Journal of Advanced Composition* emerged as a publication for the newly formed Association of Teachers of Advanced Composition, a CCCC's interest group. Like *FEN*, it was formed largely for pragmatic and pedagogical reasons, and it equated the enterprise of rhetoric and composition almost solely with writing instruction

beyond the first-year of college. Tim Lally, its first editor, explained that his own struggles to discover how and what to teach in an advanced composition course drove his vision for the journal. He wanted the journal to serve as a source for others who, like himself, were confronted with teaching ill-defined upper-level writing courses.

By the fourth year, *JAC* and its affiliated organization, ATAC, appeared to be in trouble. According to Lally (1984), ATAC had "withered away" (p. 2), and owing to what Lally described as administrative problems, lack of resources and support, three years, 1984-1986, of *JAC* were held up, the journal not appearing again until 1987. In the mid-1980s the group was reorganized and Gary Olson was appointed editor of *JAC*. Olson transformed the journal, extending its scope, purpose and audience, and redefining the policy. Under Olson (1987) JAC became:

> a journal of composition theory and advanced writing, and, as such serves as a forum for the discipline of rhetoric and composition.

Like *Freshman English News*, *JAC* was created to serve a function and an audience that was being displaced by new goals and new audiences. Both journals had to transform their original missions in order to accommodate the interests, needs and activities of the field of rhetoric and composition as it shifted its focus from the practical to the theoretical, in the broadest sense of that term.

Meeting New Demands in Rhetoric and Composition

To understand just how much the discipline of rhetoric and composition had changed by the 1980s, we can turn briefly to the creation of three other unaffiliated journals that emerged for radically different reasons than those founded previously. Unlike some of the earlier journals which sought either to provide practical *advice* for teachers (e.g., *CCC* and *FEN*) or to *teach* the discipline how to engage in particular lines of inquiry (e.g., *RTE* and *RSQ*), *PreText*, *Rhetoric Review*, and *Written Communication* were specifically designed to accommodate a growing body of theoretical and empirical work being generated in the field.

According to Victor Vitanza, what prompted his creation of *Pre/Text* in 1980 was "a lack, a void, an absence" in the journals of that time for theoretical and speculative work in rhetoric (personal communication, April 1994).

Two years later, in 1982, Theresa Enos founded *Rhetoric Review*. Enos explained that she created this periodical because "we really had at that time few 'real' journals of RHETORIC and composition" (personal communication, September 1993). *Rhetoric Review* was designed to be "a 'real' journal of rhetoric (coming out of an English department ...)" (personal communication, September 1993).

In 1984, Stephen Witte and John Daly started *Written Communication*. In an interview, Witte explained that what prompted him and Daly to create the journal was their belief that "the field was pretty much dominated by NCTE-type journals where one of the requirements always seemed to be that you make some kind of connection between your research and the teaching of writing and we thought there were some things that needed to be investigated that didn't have immediate applications to the teaching of writing" (personal communication, October 1993). Like the other two journals, the sense that a gap existed in the professional literature led to the creation of this new journal.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1980s, the editorial policies and practices of the journals had converged to create a strong legitimizing force in the field. Material changes reflect this convergence; in 1991 both *FEN* (renamed *Composition Studies/Freshman English News*) and *RSQ* changed from the informal 8 1/2 x 11 to the more formal 9 x 6 format, making them indistinguishable from other academic journals in material terms. All of these journals by the end of the 1980s encouraged sophisticated scholarship through strong editorial policies and submission guidelines that named objects of study, methods and discourse. Each became a forum for scholars working from a variety of intellectual traditions and perspectives. Finally, prior to 1980, of the journals discussed here only *RTE* had a formal blind review system for evaluating submissions. By the end of the 1980s, all these

journals had installed a rigorous review process for submissions, in large part, according to their editors, to make publication in their journals competitive in tenure and promotion cases, particularly in English departments.

The convergence of the journals in material and in functional terms indicate a growing consensus on generally accepted standards in the field. This is not to say that there is a consensus on the nature of questions or the methods for exploring issues in the field, but rather there seems to be a growing consolidation on how work ought to be judged and a growing consensus in the demands for rigorous and careful scholarship in rhetoric and composition. This demand is perhaps best captured by the final sentence in the current editorial policy for *WC*: "No topic in writing is beyond the scope of the journal. Published articles will collectively represent a wide range of methodologies, *but the methodology of each study must be handled expertly*." In coalescing around similar aims and legitimizing practices, the journals have helped to establish a strong disciplinary identity for those who claim this as their primary professional and scholarly area.

This consolidation though also reflects what Patricia Harkin has characterized as the "institution's will to homogenize" (p. 109). Vitanza (1993) notes this phenomenon in his retrospective of the first decade of *Pre/Text* . He points out that despite his efforts to be "dedicated...to the advant-garde" the agenda has been "difficult, if not downright impossible, to maintain....Much that is in *P/T*, by today's standards and perhaps those of the eighties, is conservative or is written in normal discourse for a normal audience and for an (apparently) normal field" (p. xv).

Clearly, the movement away from a service orientation, which limits the endeavor to the parameters of writing instruction, toward a more disciplinary focus signals growth and maturation of the field. These changes point up how far the field has come since the time when access to other dominant forms of knowledge production and distribution were largely unavailable. On the other hand, these changes may point to a potentially dangerous trend, namely, that of reproducing the marginalization of rhetoric and composition by

reinstitutionalizing a two-tiered system that privileges theory, research and scholarship over practice and pedagogy.

In a recent collection of essays called *Writing Ourselves Into the Story: Unheard Voices from Composition Studies*, editors Sheryl I. Fontaine and Susan Hunter (1993) argue that "this discipline, which loudly distinguishes itself from others by its alleged tolerance of plurality and heteroglossia, is systematically reducing its members' opportunities to be heard and promoting notions of hierarchy" (p. 7). As the journals have become more rigorous and more competitive, they have also become more exclusive in what and whom they publish. Does this point to a reproduction of the hierarchical structure that privileges certain kinds of scholarly practices over other kinds? This is the point I believe Peter Vandenberg will take up in his talk.

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